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A

DISCOURSE

ON

ACTS ii. 42.

In which the PRACTICE of OWNING THE COVENANT is examined :—The Arguments which have been uſed in its Favour are particularly conſidered : and Reaſons offered for its Abolition.

BY CYPRIAN STRONG, A. M.

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN CHATHAM.

To the LAW *and to the* TESTIMONY. ISAIAH.

Why call ye me, LORD, LORD, *and do not the things which I ſay ?*
JESUS CHRIST.

THE SECOND EDITION.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE considerations, which have induced the author of this discourse to forward a second impression, are the following, viz. The frequent enquiry which has been made for it,—there being none of the former impression to be obtained—the sollicitation of a number of gentlemen, whose opinions he esteems, together with a desire, that it may be generally useful.

In this edition, the style *is in many instances corrected, and some new thoughts added. Considering the more refined taste of the present day, it may be thought, that further corrections were necessary. The author is sensible, that there is sufficient room for corrections; but as he thinks his meaning is sufficiently clear, as it now is, he submits it to a candid perusal.*

A DISCOURSE, &c.

ACTS ii. 42.

And they continued, ſtedfaſtly, in the Apoſtles doctrine and fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread *and in prayers.*

IN the preceeding part of this chapter, we have an account of the moſt extraordinary and remarkable out-pouring of the ſpirit of God, and ſuch an inſtance of divine power attending the diſpenſation of truth, as, perhaps, was never known from the apoſtles days down to the preſent period of time. There was a great multitude collected around the Apoſtles, from different quarters, and, doubtleſs, for very different purpoſes: ſome, probably, out of mere curioſity, to hear what thoſe "bablers" would ſay: others to mock and ridicule them; for we are informed that ſome ſaid "theſe men are full of new wine:" And it is not unreaſonable to ſuppoſe that ſome might come to be inſtructed into that ſyſtem of truths, which occaſioned ſo much noiſe and tumult at that time. However, notwithſtanding their views and deſigns were ſo various, we find that divine truth was attended with ſuch power, that a great part of them "were pricked to the heart, and ſaid unto Peter and the reſt of the Apoſtles, men and brethren, what ſhall we do?" Peter immediately replied, "repent and be baptiſed in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the remiſſion of ſins." Divine power

ſtill attended the preaching of Peter; for we find, that many received his words gladly, and were baptiſed; and the number was no leſs than about three thouſand. "And the ſame day there were added unto them about three thouſand ſouls."

We have a further account of thoſe converts in our text, and the words following. And by the account the ſacred hiſtorian gives us, it is evident they were touched to ſome purpoſe; their profeſſion was not merely nominal, or the effect of a lifeleſs flame which the apoſtle had blown up in their minds; for we are aſſured, that they continued to feel the force of divine truth, and to act up to the character of *real* chriſtians. They continued, as the apoſtle informs us in our text, *ſtedfaſtly* in the apoſtles *doctrine* and *fellowſhip*; that is, they believed the ſame things with the apoſtles, and ſo had fellowſhip with them, in all the ſacred doctrines of Chriſtianity. And thoſe converts who were baptiſed, not only believed the ſame things, but they alſo lived in the practice of the ſame duties which the apoſtles obſerved; for it is ſaid, that they continued with them *ſtedfaſtly*, in *breaking of bread* and in *prayers*, as well as in *doctrine*. By *breaking of bread* with the apoſtles, we are undoubtedly to underſtand, that they continued to celebrate with them the memorial of Chriſt's death; that they lived in the obſervation of that ordinance and inſtitution. Expoſitors thus underſtand it. It cannot be underſtood to mean, that they held up civil communion with the apoſtles, that is, jointly partook of each other's temporal ſubſtance; for the apoſtle mentions this afterwards: and beſides, the apoſtle conſiders this as a religious *rite*; placing it among their religious exerciſes, ſuch as having fellowſhip with them in *doctrine*, and continuing with them in *prayers*. And the celebration of the Lord's Supper is elſewhere ſignified, by *breaking of bread*; as in Acts xx. 7. The *breaking of bread*, therefore, muſt have an immediate reference to the ſacrament of the Lord's Supper. And

it is worthy of our particular obſervation, that the apoſtle mentions the *breaking of bread*, or attending upon the memorial of Chriſt's death, as what thoſe who were baptiſed united in; not as what *ſome* did, but as a thing that was common to them all. It at leaſt includes all the adults. There is nothing ſaid which gives us the leaſt reaſon to conclude, that there was any diſtinction reſpecting the inſtitution of the Lord's Supper, more than reſpecting *doctrine* and *prayers*.

The words, therefore, may lead us to make the following obſervation, viz. *That thoſe adults whom the apoſtles baptiſed, were conſidered as communicants, and as being holden to an attendance upon all goſpel inſtitutions, the Lord's Supper not excepted.*

If the three thouſand, who were baptiſed on the day of penticoſt, or the adults included in that number, were conſidered and viewed as communicants at Chriſt's table, we have preſumptive evidence, at leaſt, that it was their common practice, when they adminiſtered baptiſm to adults, to receive and conſider them as communicants at the table of the Lord.

But this may further appear, in the courſe of the enſuing enquiries. What is propoſed in further diſcourſing from theſe words, is,

First, To ſhow, that thoſe adults who had the privilege of baptiſm for themſelves or their ſeed, in the days of the apoſtles, were conſidered as communicants, and as being equally holden to an attendance upon the ſacrament of the Lord's Supper, as upon any other divine inſtitution.

Secondly, More particularly to enquire, whether the practice of owning the covenant, as it is called, which admits perſons to the privilege of baptiſm, who profeſſedly and practically with-hold their attendance on the ſacrament of the Lord's Supper, be ſcriptural and ſo to be indulged.

Under this particular it is propoſed to conſider every thing which is offered in favor of the practice of

owning the covenant, and to suggest reasons for its exclusion.

In discoursing upon the points now proposed, I shall treat the *practice* of *owning the covenant* with freedom and plainness, yet nothing *personal* is intended, respecting those who are friendly to it.

I hope there are none so set in any particular scheme, as to be unwilling it should come under a serious examination; or, to give it up, if it be not founded on the sacred oracles of the living God. I would request, that every one would divest his mind of all prejudice, and be disposed to receive light, whether it may be in favor of, or in opposition to former sentiments. Casting away all *wrath* and *strife*, and laying aside all superfluity of naughtiness, be disposed to receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to make you wise unto salvation. I will now proceed,

First, To attempt to show, that those adults who had the privilege of baptism for themselves or their seed, in the days of the apostles, were considered as communicants, and as being equally holden to an attendance upon the Lord's Supper, as upon any other divine institution.

I do not suppose, neither would I be understood to say, that an attendance upon the institution of the Lord's Supper, or any other *particular* instituted duty, is the term or qualification for baptism; but an observation of and an attendance upon *all* public instituted duties is the term. What is meant is, that the apostles viewed and considered those adults whom they baptised, *equally* holden to observe *all* the duties and institutions of the Christian religion. One duty or institution was not dispensed with rather than another. And I can see no room to doubt of this, from any thing said in the writings of the apostles. The sacred scriptures, give no intimation of a different practice, in the days of the apostles; but afford much positive evidence, that they did consider those whom they

baptiſed, as being equally holden to walk together in an attendance upon all inſtituted duties. This not only appears clear to me, but ſome, who have been zealous advocates for a contrary practice, have declared, that it is ſo evident to them as not to admit of a doubt. One in particular, when writing in vindication of that practice which tolerates perſons in the omiſſion of the Lord's Supper, ſays, concerning that ordinance and inſtitution, "This was an ordinance appointed for the whole body of Chriſt's viſible church, who profeſſed the chriſtian faith: and accordingly, *they thus practiſed in the apoſtles days; as all the diſciples attended upon this memorial.*"* This conceſſion, in one who is an advocate for a contrary practice, is ſomewhat remarkable; and is not unfavorable, to what is now ſuppoſed, viz. That the apoſtles were ſtrangers to the practice of adminiſtering baptiſm, to ſuch as live in the neglect of plain goſpel inſtitutions.

But we will proceed to a more particular conſideration of the practice of the apoſtes, to ſee whether it be not evident, that they conſidered all the adults whom they baptiſed, as holden to an attendance upon all inſtituted duties of the covenant, the Lord's Supper not excepted.† And the following things afford ſatisfying evidence, that the apoſtles adminiſtered baptiſm to no adults perſonally, or their ſeed, excepting ſuch as they conſidered as communicants, or holden to an attendance upon all inſtitutions, without excepting the Lord's Supper.

* Ely's Serm. on Gal. iii. 27. p. 34.

† It is taken for granted here, and through this diſcourſe, that the ſame qualifications are requiſite in an adult, for the dedication of his ſeed in baptiſm, as for the dedication of himſelf. If it were neceſſary in the apoſtles days, for an adult to engage to attend upon all inſtituted duties in order to his *own* baptiſm, it muſt have been neceſſary to the dedication of his *ſeed*. This, it is ſuppoſed, no one will diſpute.

1. The nature and import of the commiſſion, which our Lord gave his apoſtles, leads us to conclude, that they conſidered all adults whom they baptiſed, as holden to the practice of all Chriſtian duties.

We have the higheſt reaſon to ſuppoſe, the apoſtles acted up to the ſpirit and meaning of their commiſſion. And the commiſſion which Chriſt gave them, made it incumbent on them to inſiſt upon it, that all whom they ſhould baptiſe, ſhould attend upon all inſtituted duties. The commiſſion which Chriſt gave his apoſtles, is expreſſed in theſe words; "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptiſing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt;—*teaching them to obſerve* ALL THINGS *whatſoever I have commanded you.*"* This commiſſion made it incumbent on the apoſtles, firſt to teach, and then to baptiſe: But this is not all; for, in it they were ſtrictly charged to inſiſt upon it, that all thoſe whom they ſhould thus teach and baptiſe, ſhould obſerve *all things*, that is, all the duties which Chriſt had commanded them.—And, was not the Lord's Supper one duty which Chriſt had juſt inſtituted and made incumbent on his diſciples? Was not this commanded duty, therefore, one thing that they were to inſiſt upon ſhould be obſerved, by thoſe whom they ſhould baptiſe? This commiſſion will no more admit of tolerating perſons in a profeſſed and practical omiſſion of the inſtitution of the Lord's Supper, than in the neglect of any other inſtitution.—It is as inconſiſtent with the plain meaning and import of the commiſſion, to tolerate thoſe, who have the privilege of baptiſm, in a neglect of the ſacrament of the Lord's Supper, as in an omiſſion of any other duty. And, as we have reaſon to believe the apoſtles acted up to the ſpirit of their commiſſion, ſo we muſt conclude, that thoſe adults, who had the

* Matt. xxviii. 19. 20.

privilege of baptiſm granted them by the apoſtles, were viewed and conſidered as equally holden to an attendance upon the ſacrament of the Lord's Supper, as upon any other inſtituted duty. If we are to make up a judgment concerning the practice of the apoſtles by the commiſſion they received from Chriſt, we muſt conclude, that their diſciples or baptiſed adults were holden and bound to attend upon all inſtituted duties, without excepting the inſtituted memorial of Chriſt's death. Again,

II. The account given us of the *tranſactions* of the apoſtles, affords another reaſon for concluding, that they conſidered the adults to whom they adminiſtered baptiſm, as bound to attend upon all inſtituted duties, without excepting the inſtituted memorial of Chriſt's death.

We have no reaſon to think, from any thing the apoſtles ſaid or tranſacted, that ſome adults who enjoyed the privilege of baptiſm, were conſidered as communicants and others were not; or, that ſome did attend upon the inſtituted memorial of Chriſt's death, and others were tolerated in a neglect or omiſſion of that inſtitution. We may as ſoon find ſufficient evidence to conclude, that ſome did not continue ſtedfaſt in the apoſtles *doctrine*, and in *prayers*, and were tolerated in ſuch a neglect or omiſſion, as that they were tolerated and indulged in a neglect of the inſtitution of the Lord's Supper. It is very poſſible, that ſome might but ſeldom have an opportunity of attending upon that memorial, as well as upon other inſtituted duties; yet, as often as they had opportunity to do it, they were equally under obligations to attend upon it as upon other duties of the covenant; at leaſt there is no reaſon for any other concluſion, either from what the apoſtles ſaid, or the account we have of their tranſactions. But, we have much poſitive evidence, that all baptiſed adults, were bound to attend upon the memo-

rial of Christ's death, as well as all other covenant duties. The apostles, in all their letters and transactions, treated all their disciples as being in *one* standing, and as united in *one* body ;—having *one* faith, *one* Lord, and *one* baptism. There is not the least intimation of any distinction among them ; especially, it is no where intimated, that some were communicants at the Lord's table and others were not.—And does it, my hearers, look probable, that there was this distinction since there is no mention made of it ? Why should we think there was this difference or distinction, when there is no intimation of it ? It is a conclusive argument that there was no such distinction known to the apostles, since it is no where intimated in any of their writings or transactions. I am sensible, that as to some, such as the *Eunuch*, *Cornelius*, and others, it is not said, explicitly, that they were bound to attend upon the Lord's Supper ; but can we from thence conclude, that they were not holden to an attendance upon it, whenever they should have opportunity ? If we may, we may also conclude, that they were not holden to an attendance upon *one* duty of the covenant ; for no one duty is particularized. There is as much mention made of the institution of the Lord's Supper as of any other institution ; as of *doctrine* or *prayers*. If it be a sufficient reason to conclude, that the *Eunuch*, *Cornelius*, or others, were not considered as holden to the observation of the institution of the Lord's Supper, as often as they should have opportunity, because it is not particularly mentioned, we must for the same reason conclude they were not holden to practise any Christian duty, because no one is mentioned. The account is left in such a manner as leads us to conclude, that there was no distinction thought of among Christian duties ; either those persons must be considered as holden to all, or to the observation of no instituted duty of the covenant.

Furthermore, the positive evidence that there was

no distinction among christian duties, made or allowed of by the apostles will be increased, if it be considered, that the celebration of the Lord's Supper is mentioned as what was *common* to the disciples, in the apostles days. When that memorial was attended upon, it is mentioned as what was common to the disciples in that day. Thus it is said, Acts xx. 7. "And upon the first day of the week, when *the disciples* came together to *break bread*, &c. &c. It is not said when *some* of the disciples came together to break bread, but when *the disciples*," &c. The apostle speaks of it as what the disciples did in common; not as what some did and others neglected.

Again; it is expressly said, that they who were admitted to baptism, on the day of Penticost, did continue, stedfastly, with the apostles, in *breaking of bread*, as well as in *doctrine* and *prayers*.

On the whole, therefore, have we not the most abundant reason to conclude, both from the nature of the commission which Christ gave his apostles, and also from the account given us of their transactions, that they considered such adults as they received to baptism, as holden to observe and attend upon all instituted duties, without excepting the institution of the Lord's Supper? What reason have we to think that the apostles tolerated their disciples in a neglect of the institution of the Lord's Supper, rather than any other instituted duty? I think no one, who impartially considers the case, can find the least evidence, that the apostles ever thought of any distinction among covenant duties; their commission made none, and there is no appearance of any distinction being allowed or made in their practice.

Let us now proceed,

Secondly, More particularly to enquire, whether the practice of owning the covenant, as it is called, which admits persons to the privilege of baptism, who professedly and practically with-hold their attendance

upon the ſacrament of the Lord's Supper, be ſcriptural and to be indulged.

The practice of owning the covenant, admits adults to the privilege of baptiſm, for themſelves and their ſeed, who neither view themſelves under any covenant obligations to live in the obſervation of a plain goſpel inſtitution, nor do the church conſider them as being bound by their covenant to attend upon it; and therefore not diſciplineable or cenſurable for a neglect and omiſſion of it.* This indeed, is not the only diſtinction which is made betwixt thoſe who own the covenant and thoſe who are in full communion, that the former are not conſidered as being under covenant vows to celebrate the inſtituted memorial of Chriſt's death, and the latter are; but thoſe, who *own the covenant*, are not conſidered as having a right to a voice in the church, when tranſacting the affairs of Chriſt's kingdom.† They do not conſider themſelves as being under the ſame obligation to watch over and deal with one another, that ſuch are under who are in full communion: And many do not conſider themſelves as under ſuch obligations to a holy and religious life, as ſuch are under who are communicants at Chriſt's table; but this I conſider as an abuſe of the original practice. The practice, therefore, will not be conſidered in this groſs ſenſe of it. We will only enquire, whether the practice of adminiſtering baptiſm to ſuch adult perſons, or to the ſeed of ſuch as profeſſedly and practically with-hold an attendance upon the inſtitution of the Lord's Supper, be ſcriptural?

If the practice of owning the covenant, as deſcribed

* I am not inſenſible, that ſome call the covenant which ſuch make a *full* and *complete* covenant; but I am unable to ſee the propriety of its being ſo called, ſince the covenant perſon does not mean to engage, nor the church underſtand him as engaging an attendance upon a plain covenant duty and expreſs command of Jeſus Chriſt.

† The Synod, held at Cambridge, Anno 1662, which begun the practice of owning the covenant, did not conſider perſons, in that particular ſtanding, as having any right to vote in the church, or with thoſe who were in full communion.

in this enquiry, be not ſcriptural, it is not to be indulged; for the ſcripture muſt be our only rule. If we have not ſcripture *precept* or *example* for the practice, it has no foundation. As to poſitive inſtitutions, we are bound by the expreſs will of God. We may, indeed, argue relatively to them as Naaman the leper did, about the rivers of Jordan and Pharpar; we may ſay that we do not ſee, why ſuch and ſuch methods may not do, as well as thoſe which we find expreſsly inſtituted by God; but we have no more right to purſue ſuch reaſonings in practice, than Naaman had to purſue his; neither can we expect better ſucceſs. We muſt abide by what is revealed, and be determined by the inſtitution itſelf. Such as are unwilling to be determined by the Bible, muſt anſwer it to Chriſt, who hath ſaid, that heaven and earth ſhall paſs away before one jot or tittle ſhall fail of all that he hath ſaid. A church ought be very cautious, how they adopt rules and practices which are of mere human invention; for in adopting ſuch rules, they reject the authority of Chriſt, and ſo pollute all their offerings. In vain, ſays Chriſt, ye do worſhip me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men.* It is, therefore, of very great importance, that a church grounds its practice upon the laws and inſtitutions of its king and head. With theſe things in view, let us examine the practice of owning the covenant. And it is hoped every mind will be attentive, and ſo far diveſted of all prejudice, as to be willing to know and receive the truth, wherever it may appear.

In proſecuting this enquiry, I ſhall,

I. Conſider thoſe things which are urged in favor of the practice.

II. A variety of things will be exhibited, to ſhow the unſcriptural nature of the practice of owning the covenant; and why it ought to be aboliſhed.

* Matt. xv. 9.

I. We are to consider those things which are urged in favour of the practice of owning the covenant, or of admitting such adults to the privilege of baptism, for themselves or seed, who professedly and practically withhold their attendance upon the institution of the Lord's Supper.

It is my design, to take notice of the various things which I can recollect to have seen or heard urged, in favor of the practice, however trivial; and to detect their fallacy. And,

1st. In vindication of the practice, it hath been said, that many very great and good men have been and still are in it; and that it has been of long continuance.

Reply. As to the time this practice has been in being, I think we may safely affirm, it cannot be traced back to the days of the apostles.—And it is certain it was never known among the churches in this land, till near half a century after the first settlement of it. But, if it should be granted to have been of long continuance, yet in as much as the apostles were strangers to it; this ought to have no weight in our minds.—And, as to such *great* and *good* men as have been in the practice, I believe, such as urge their example as an argument for it, wholly mistake the views they have always entertained of it. I trust, I may venture to say, that not one out of ten of those who have been *in* the practice, have been *for it*. Those who have written upon the subject, and have been on the side of the practice, have in general acknowledged, that although they were *in* it they were not *for* it.* So that notwithstanding many great and good men have

* But, why is it that one says, I am *in* it, but not *for* it;—another, that scarcely one minister in this nation is pleased with it, if it be a practice which is of divine institution? If God hath instituted the practice, or if it be agreeable to divine institution, why are they not *for* it? Why are they not *pleased* with it? Are not God's institutions wise and well calculated to answer his own purposes? But if the practice be not agreeable to divine institution, why are they in it?

been *in* the practice, yet, in as much as they, in general, have not been *for* it, it ought to be considered as an evidence and testimony against the practice, rather than an argument in its favor. Besides, it ought to be considered and remembered, that many great and good men have not only been *in* but *for* a contrary practice, and could never be reconciled to the practice of owning the covenant. Many have been zealously *against* the practice of owning the covenant, while very few have been really *for* it. But if this should not satisfy all, we have other examples to oppose to the practice of those, who have been *in* it, which ought to give full satisfaction; I mean the example of the apostles. They were as great and as good men, as can be supposed ever to have been *in* the practice, with this very weighty circumstance in their favor, that they were under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; and there is not the least evidence, that they were ever *in* or *for* the practice under consideration; but the practice is against the spirit of their commission, and the whole of their transactions. So that what is now urged in favor of the practice, from the example of great and good men, who have been barely *in* it, cannot be considered as having any weight, since not only other great and good men, but the apostles, who were under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, have been not only not *in* the practice, but against it.

But,

2dly. It has been further urged, in favour of the practice now under consideration, that under the former dispensation, the Jews who did not keep the passover, had the privilege of circumcision for their seed; from whence it is inferred, that it is the will of God that the seal of the covenant should be administered, to some at least, who do not attend upon the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It is said, that the Jew under ceremonial defilement, who might not keep the pas-

sover, might, nevertheless, have the privilege of circumcision.*

Reply. Whoever carefully attends to the case, must see, that there is nothing in what is now urged, which makes any thing for the practice of owning the covenant, or of administering baptism to such as live in the professed and continued omission of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The Jew, in case of legal defilement, was forbidden to eat of the passover; in omitting it, under [illegible] circumstances, he did it in obedience to the command of God; but he who owns his covenant withholds his attendance upon the Lord's Supper in opposition to a plain and express command.

Furthermore, The cases of the defiled Jew, and of those who own the covenant, are totally dissimilar in another respect. The Jew, who was defiled, was only an *occasional* omitter of the passover; he was not suffered to omit it time after time, and year after year; he might not omit the passover so much as one time, on the whole, on account of legal defilement. This will appear, if we attend to the case as stated Numb. ix. 1—13. It appears from the account therein given us, that God had directed the people to keep the passover, on the 14th day of the first month, according to the original institution. It happened that some were defiled with the touch of a dead body. They went to Moses with their case, as they were at a loss about keeping the passover with the people. Moses asks direction of God. God answers Moses as in the 9th and 10th verses, in these words. "Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, if any man of you, or of your posterity be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off *yet he shall keep the passover unto the Lord. The fourteenth day of the second month they shall keep it.*" It appears from these words, that the person who was unclean on the 14th day of the first month,

* Ely's Serm. on Gal. iii. 27.

when the body of the Jews kept the paſſover, might not live in the neglect of it till the next annual return of the paſſover, he muſt keep it the very next month; he might not omit it, on the whole, for one time. So that, on the whole there was no toleration of an omiſſion for any length of time, on account of ceremonial defilement. At moſt, no more can be pretended, than a toleration of an occaſional omiſſion, during the ſhort term of ceremonial defilement, or for one month only; he muſt keep the paſſover as often as the reſt of the people.*

Now, how does this at all juſtify, or even countenance the practice of admitting ſuch to the privilege of baptiſm, who omit the Lord's Supper, not merely on ſome occaſions, but on all occaſions, and that year after year, and if they pleaſe forever? If it were true, that a Jew might have circumciſion, although he ſhould *neglect* to keep the paſſover *occaſionally*, could we from thence infer, that it is the will of God, that a perſon, under the goſpel diſpenſation, ſhould have the privilege of baptiſm, although he ſhould live in a *continued* omiſſion of the Lord's Supper, year after year, and if he ſhould pleaſe forever? I am ſure it cannot be pretended. There is nothing in the caſe of the defiled Jew, that ſo much as countenances the practice of owning the covenant. We are rather taught by it, that it is the will of God that no public inſtitution ſhould be neglected or omitted; for, rather than the Jew ſhould, on the whole, live in one omiſſion of the paſſover, God makes ſpecial proviſion and a new inſtitution for him, who was under ſuch circumſtances,

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† Some have ſaid, that ceremonial cleanneſs was typical of moral purity; and as a Jew, who doubted of his ceremonial cleanneſs was tolerated in an omiſſion of the paſſover, ſo may a Chriſtian be tolerated in omitting the Lord's Supper, when he doubts of his moral purity.

Anſwer. The Jew was not tolerated in *one* miſſion. He might not delay more than one month on account of his doubts, or in caſe of *real* defilement. So that if there were any thing *typical* in the caſe, it would not prove any thing in favour of a profeſſed and continued omiſſion of any ordinance; for, on the whole there was no omiſſion tolerated or allowed: And but one month was allowed for the removal of real defilement.

as prohibited his keeping it with the body of the people. Again,

3dly. God's dealings with the Jews in Josiah's time, have been mentioned in justification of the practice of owning the covenant. It has been said, that the Jews, who from the time of the Judges to Josiah's time, had not regularly attended upon the passover, enjoyed circumcision and were not rejected and cast off by God ;—from hence it is inferred, that persons may be so far in good standing in the covenant, as to be qualified for baptism, although they live in a continual omission of the Lord's Supper.*

Reply. Is it not as true that the Jews, as a body, were in gross idolatry when Josiah came to the throne, as that they had omitted, for a long time, regularly to keep the passover ? Certainly it is.† May we not then, with as much reason, infer that baptism may be administered to *gross idolators*, as to those who neglect a plain institution ? If we may infer that persons may be qualified for the seal of the covenant, when they live in the continued omission of plain institutions, from God's not casting off the Jews when they neglected regularly to attend upon the passover, we may infer, that persons in gross idolatry are qualified for the seal of the covenant ; because it is just as true that the Jews were not cast off when in gross idolatry, as that they were not when they neglected the passover ; for they were in open idolatry at the same time.

What is here urged, therefore, is as much in favor of admitting *gross idolators* to baptism, and of their being qualified subjects for it, as of the practice of owning the covenant.

The truth of the case is this ; the Jews in the beginning of Josiah's reign, were utterly unqualified for one church privilege.—Had an individual been in the state the Jews were, in the beginning of Josiah's reign, the church must have excommunicated him, if they

* Ely's Serm. p. 31. † See 2. Kings, chap. xxii. and xxiii.

had proceeded according to the rules which God had given them : And God, in not casting them off, acted above the laws which he had given his church as a rule of their conduct. God had a right so to do, but his church must abide by the laws and rules which God gives them.

4thly. It has been further said, in favor of owning the covenant, that such as were baptised in infancy, have a right, merely on that account, to the seal of baptism for their seed ; therefore, nothing further is requisite than to own the covenant.

Reply. Do such as urge this mean, that children have a right to baptism, merely on account of the baptism of the parent ? If this be their meaning, it is nothing in favor of the practice of owning the covenant ; for it makes owning the covenant wholly unnecessary. If the baptism of parents be, in itself a qualification for the baptism of their seed, then owning the covenant is wholly unnecessary : And so what is now urged can be nothing in favor of owning the covenant, nor any other personal transaction, in adult years.

But, the supposition that the baptism of a parent is, in itself, a qualification for the baptism of his seed, is altogether groundless and unscriptural. The baptism of a parent is nothing, unless he continues in good standing in the covenant, or lives in the practice of all covenant duties. Hence says the apostle, " *Circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law, but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.*"§ It appears from this passage, that the baptism of a parent is nothing, unless he keep the law, or lives in the practice of covenant duties. If we should suppose that parents were baptised in infancy or riper years, yet should not live in the practice of covenant duties, they would be no better than heathens or publicans,—their circumcision would be uncircumcision. In order to a person's having any standing in the covenant, it is absolutely necessary, that he be neither a *heretic* nor *immoral* person ; persons of either of those

§ Rom. ii. 25.

characters may have no ſtanding in the church of Chriſt. It is as neceſſary that a perſon who was baptiſed in infancy, ſhould be *found in the faith*, and live in the practice of the duties of religion, in order to his having a ſtanding in the church in adult years, or enjoying church privileges, as it is for any other perſon, whatever. *Hereſy* or *immorality* diſqualifies a perſon for church privileges; his circumciſion becomes uncircumciſion.† This leads us to ſee, that the baptiſm of a parent is not of itſelf a qualification for church privileges; he muſt be found in the faith, and live in the practice of the duties of religion; otherwiſe his circumciſion becomes uncircumciſion. Theſe obſervations, alſo lead us to ſee, that it is as neceſſary, that a perſon who was baptiſed in infancy, ſhould make a confeſſion of his faith, and declare his compliance with the covenant of grace, in order to his enjoying privileges in adult years, as it is for any other perſon; for unleſs he be found in the faith, and do comply with the covenant, he is no better than the unbaptiſed,—his circumciſion is become uncircumciſion; and we muſt judge that he is found in the faith and does comply with the covenant, by the ſame rule by which we judge of others. So that what is now urged, reſpecting the baptiſm of parents, is nothing to the purpoſe; for if it be meant that the baptiſm of parents, in itſelf, qualifies their ſeed for baptiſm, then owning the covenant is perfectly unneceſſary: But if it be meant that they muſt in addition to it, be in good covenant ſtanding, that is, found in the faith and in the practice of covenant duties, this is utterly inconſiſtent with the practice of owning the covenant; for then it will be neceſſary that they live in the obſervation of the inſtitution of the Lord's Supper, which is a covenant duty: So that what is now urged cannot be viewed as any ſupport or juſtification of the practice of owning the covenant.

† Tit. iii. 10. 11. 2. Theſſ. iii. 11. 12, 13.

Again,

5thly. It has been said, in justification of the practice of owning the covenant, that an omission of the Lord's Supper is too small a failure, on account of which, to cut a person off from the privilege of baptism.

Reply. 1st. A neglect to keep the *passover*, was not too small a failure in the view of God, to merit excommunication.

The Jew who did not keep the passover was to have no standing among God's people. It is said, "the man that is clean and not on a journey, that forbeareth to keep the passover, even the same soul *shall be cut off* from his people."† Ceremonial defilement, or being on a distant journey apologized for an occasional omission of the passover, but not for a continued neglect. There was no sufficient apology or excuse could be given for a continued omission of the passover. It becomes us then to be very cautious, how we urge it as too small a failure, on account of which to cut persons off from church privileges, merely because they neglect the institution of the Lord's Supper; for that is as reasonable and important an institution as the passover; and yet we find that God viewed an omission of the latter a sufficient reason for excommunicating the delinquent.

2dly. I would enquire how it comes about, that it is viewed as so small and inconsiderable a failure, in a person to neglect the institution of the Lord's Supper?

Is not the institution of the Lord's Supper a duty of the covenant? Is it not as reasonable an institution as any one in the New Testament? Is not Christ infinitely worthy of a memorial? Has he not done enough to render a memorial of him both reasonable and delightful? How comes it about, then, that it is viewed as so very small and inconsiderable a failure, to

† Numb. ix. 13.

neglect so plain and reasonable an institution? If living in the neglect of plain covenant duties does not disqualify for covenant privileges, it is difficult to say what does. If it be scandalous to live in the omission of plain, reasonable and important covenant duties, it is so to neglect the institution of the Lord's Supper; for that is a plain, a reasonable and important covenant duty: And it is difficult to account for it, that it should be viewed as so innocent and harmless an omission to withhold an attendance upon it. Whoever considers how plain and reasonable a duty it is, cannot urge the omission of it, as too small a failure to disqualify for covenant privileges; for if neglecting plain covenant duties does not disqualify persons for privileges, nothing can do it. And whoever considers how necessary an attendance upon the passover was in the view of God, in order to a standing in the church of old, will be very cautious how he urges a neglect of so important and reasonable an institution as that of the Lord's Supper, as being too small a failure on account of which to with-hold covenant privileges. Again,

6thly. It has been said by some, in vindication of the practice of owning the covenant, that it is no where expressly forbidden.

Reply. There are a thousand other possible practices which mankind may adopt, that are not expressly prohibited. The question is, is the practice agreeable to the institution? The want of institution is a sufficient prohibition. We have no right or warrant to take one step beyond the institution. If God has given us liberty to act, we have a warrant for acting; but a want of licence is a full prohibition. It is not expressly said, that you may not baptise your own children; but you do not venture upon the practice, because you do not find a warrant for it; so a want of licence in the present case, is a sufficient objection against the practice now under consideration, although it be not, by name, expressly prohibited. Furthermore,

7thly. It has been urged in favor of the practice of owning the covenant, that persons may be qualified for baptism, and not for the Lord's Supper; and therefore the practice of owning the covenant must be both lawful and necessary.

Reply. I do not recollect ever to have seen a diversity of qualifications for the two ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, urged as a reason for the practice of owning the covenant, by any author who has written upon the subject; however, as I am persuaded that it has weight and influence in the view of some, in this place, I shall briefly consider its weight and merit. And here I would observe,

1st. It does not appear that God hath ever made any distinction betwixt the two ordinances, baptism and the Lod's Supper, in point of qualification; if it be so, *we* have no right to make any.

There is not the least evidence, from any thing written in our Bibles, that the apostles made any distinction, in point of qualification for the two ordinances, in their practice. The *commission* they received from Christ, and their *practice* agree in this, that one and the same subject is qualified for both ordinances; for those whom they baptised, continued with them in "*breaking of bread*," as well as in *doctrine* and *prayers*.

2dly. What is now urged, respecting a diversity of qualifications for the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, is contrary to the plain import of the practice you have always been used to, in this place.

You have ever had but one covenant; and a compliance with *that* has always been made necessary, both for the privilege of baptism and the Lord's Supper. You have always required persons to engage the same things in order to their enjoying either ordinance; excepting the one must engage an attendance upon the institution of the Lord's Supper and the other not. This makes it evident, that it was always supposed, by the church and people in this place, that the qualifications, I mean the *essential* qualifications for the two

ordinances, were the ſame; otherwiſe they have always been wrong in inſiſting upon the ſame things as requiſite for an attendance upon either.

3dly. What is now urged is contrary to the opinion of miniſters in general, who have been *in* the practice of owning the covenant.

It is not on account of any *real* difference as to the qualifications for the two ordinances, that miniſters practiſe baptiſing or giving the privilege of baptiſm to ſuch adults as neglect the inſtitution of the Lord's Supper; but in condeſcenſion to the *groundleſs ſcruples* and *ignorance* of the people. It is on this ground, and not on any real difference, as to the qualifications for the two ordinances, that the practice of owning the covenant reſts, in the view of ſuch miniſters as practiſe upon it; ſo far as I am acquainted with their views of the practice.

4thly. Is it not demonſtrably true, that there cannot be a diverſity of qualifications for the two ordinances.

Our Saviour moſt certainly knew, what his will ever would be, reſpecting the ordinances of baptiſm and the Lord's Supper: And he, very expreſsly, gave it in charge to his apoſtles, to inſiſt upon it that the baptiſed ſhould attend upon all inſtituted duties. "*Go ye and teach all nations, baptiſing them in the name of, &c. teaching them to obſerve* ALL *things whatſoever I have commanded you.*" Now, had there been a diverſity of qualifications for thoſe two ordinances, we cannot ſuppoſe, that our Saviour would have charged his apoſtles to teach and inſiſt upon it, that all thoſe whom they ſhould baptiſe, ſhould do or obſerve *all* things whatſoever he had commanded.

Again. As a qualification for baptiſm, it is abſolutely neceſſary that a perſon be in covenant with God; for baptiſm is a *mark* and *token* of the covenant; this mark and token cannot be fixed on any, excepting ſuch as have a viſible covenant relation to God:—

And, when a perſon takes upon him the covenant, he *engages* to do *all* the duties of the covenant ; this muſt be a neceſſary qualification for baptiſm. And can any pretend that it is a greater thing, or requires higher qualifications to do the duties of the covenant ; than *to engage to do* them ? And is not the Lord's Supper a covenant duty ? Does not the covenant comprehend all duties ? Moſt certainly it does. And does not God make over all the benefits, privileges, and bleſſings of the covenant to his covenant people ? There is nothing more manifeſt than that he does. If theſe things be ſo, how can there be higher qualifications requiſite for the Lord's Supper than for baptiſm, ſince it is abſolutely neceſſary that there be a covenant relation to God in order to baptiſm ? Since the covenant does extend to all Chriſtian duties—and ſince God bequeaths all the bleſſings and privileges of the covenant to men, on the ſole condition of their being in covenant with him, it is without the leaſt ſhadow of reaſon that it is urged, that men may be qualified for baptiſm and not for the Lord's Supper ; for being in covenant with God is the condition of all covenant bleſſings ; is the alone qualification for baptiſm, for the Lord's Supper, and for all the bleſſings of Chriſt's kingdom. So that the practice of owning the covenant cannot be grounded on any *real* difference, in point of qualification for the two ordinances, baptiſm and the Lord's Supper.

But ſome may poſſibly ſay, that baptiſm is only an introduction into Chriſt's ſchool, and ſo does not ſuppoſe that a perſon is *fully* inſtructed into the Chriſtian religion, and prepared for all its ordinances.

Anſwer. That muſt be an egregious miſtake ; for as baptiſm is a *token* of the covenant, and ſuppoſes that a perſon is *in* the covenant, ſo it always ſuppoſes that a perſon is inſtructed into the nature of it, and acquainted with the capital duties which are contained in it. And it is exceedingly evident, that our Saviour him-

felf fuppofed, that fuch inftruction was neceffary to precede baptifm, as qualified a perfon, an adult, to obferve all the capital duties of the Chriftian religion. Hence, when he fent his apoftles to baptife, he charged them in their commiffion, *firft* to *teach*, *then* to baptife. Inftruction was to precede baptifm; and the inftruction was, doubtlefs, to extend to all thofe duties which would be incumbent on them, in confequence of baptifm: and thofe were *all* the duties of the Chriftian religion; for they were to teach them to obferve *all things* whatfoever Chrift had commanded them. This objection, therefore, proceeds from miftaken conceptions of the nature and defign of baptifm.

It may be further urged, that there muft be greater qualifications requifite for the Lord's Supper than covenanting, becaufe we find fuch fpecial judgments threatned to, and actually inflicted upon the profaners of the Lord's Supper, as cannot be found refpecting the unworthy covenanter. It is faid "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himfelf." And the Corinthians who profaned the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, were vifited with the judgment of peftilence, whereas there are no fuch warnings given againft covenanting unworthily.

Anfwer. What the apoftle means by *damnation*, in the paffage juft mentioned, is *judgement*; teaching us, that fuch as profane that ordinance do expofe themfelves to the awful judgments of heaven: And this was exemplified in the Corinthians, who fuffered by the judgment of peftilence, as a puniftment for their profaning that ordinance. But, has not God warned us in as folemn a manner againft covenanting unworthily? Did not God threaten Ifrael with *great* and *terrible* judgments, for drawing near to him with *their* lips whilft their hearts were far from him? Turn your attention, alfo, to the cafe of *Ananias* and *Sapphira*. They had folemnly covenanted to dedicate themfelves and their eftate to the fervice of God; but they dealt

deceitfully with him, and kept back part of the price for which they had ſold their inheritance. And did God behold their conduct with greater indifference, than the conduct of the Corinthians when they profaned the Lord's Supper? No; for he ſent the moſt awful judgment upon them; they were ſtruck dead in an inſtant!

Upon the whole, therefore, let us turn our attention which way we will, we have the utmoſt reaſon to conclude, that the qualifications for covenanting or baptiſm, are as great as thoſe for the Lord's Supper; and ſo there cannot be any neceſſity of the practice of owning the covenant, on account of a diverſity of qualifications, reſpecting the ordinances of baptiſm and the Lord's Supper. But,

8thly, It is urged, that notwithſtanding the qualifications for baptiſm and the Lord's Supper are *one* and the ſame, yet, in as much as ſome may *think* themſelves qualified for baptiſm, and at the ſame time *ſcruple* their qualifications for the Lord's Supper, *kindneſs*, *tenderneſs* and *condeſcenſion*, to the ſcrupulous, require that we admit them to the former in a neglect of the latter.—What is here urged, I take to be the great ſupport of the practice, in the view of the moſt of thoſe who are in it.

Reply. I am an advocate for kindneſs and tenderneſs, and would act ſuch a part as *real* kindneſs and tenderneſs require; but herein I muſt be directed by God, who beſt knows what is moſt for his glory and the good of men. We may not go to unjuſtifiable lengths, under the notion of *kindneſs* and *tenderneſs*. And, for my part, I am unable to find the leaſt warrant in ſcripture, for ſetting aſide, or diſpenſing with plain inſtituted duties, in condeſcenſion to the unjuſt ſcruples or prejudices of men. There are precepts and examples in abundance, for making *indifferent* things give way to the ſcruples and prejudices of mankind: But there is neither precept nor example for making *divine ordinances* and *inſtitutions* give way to ſuch ſcru-

ples and prejudices. *Indifferent* things ought to be sacrificed to them; but divine *institutions* may not be dispensed with; they are more sacred than groundless prejudices*. We do well in giving up *indifferent* things for the sake of easing the consciences of the scrupulous, and in condescension to the prejudices of the weak; but the moment we set aside, or dispense with divine institutions for that purpose, we do that which is without any scripture precept or example. We have as good a right to give up every law and institution of Christ's kingdom, as one particular institution; for they are equally binding and cloathed with the same authority.

What St. Paul says, respecting the condescension we ought to use towards "*him that is weak in the faith*," wholly respects *indifferent* things, such as particular *days*, *meats* and *drinks*; he does not give the least intimation, that we must give up or dispense with plain institutions for the sake of gratifying or giving ease to

* A scruple relative to an attendance upon the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, has been considered, as being very *sacred* indeed! But on what account or for what good reason, I am utterly unable to conceive. The institution of the Lord's Supper is a very plain one; and what can there be, which should render a scruple, as to attending upon it, so very *virtuous*, or even *innocent*? If a servant should scruple to comply with the will of his master, in a case where his will was obvious, and his demand reasonable, would such a scruple be thought an excuse! Scruples, as to doing what Christ most *manifestly* requires and demands, cannot, certainly, be the most innocent scruples. If it should be said, that the scrupulous person only scruples his *qualifications* to do as Christ directs, still it is difficult to conceive, how it can be considered as an excuse or apology; for a person not being *prepared* to do his Lord's will, when he knows what it is, was not considered by our Saviour himself, as affording the most acceptable apology. He says, "*That servant should be beaten with many stripes.*"

A person being very *serious* in scrupling to do as Christ demands, or in scrupling his own qualifications to do it, does not, as I can conceive, afford the least apology or excuse. If a person should scruple to do *that* which is expressly *forbidden*, it would be a virtuous scruple: but when he scruples to do that which is expressly *required*, the scruple, instead of being *virtuous*, or even *innocent*, must become *criminal*. It is not to be wondered at, that men should sometimes scruple to do what other *men* require; but it is somewhat surprising, that they should scruple to do what JESUS CHRIST expressly demands, and consider it as *virtuous* and *meritorious*.

the weak and ſcrupulous†. And the inſtance of Paul's circumciſing *Timothy*, in condeſcenſion to the prejudices of the Jews, is far from affording an example of ſuch condeſcenſion as that which we have now under conſideration. Paul, in circumciſing *Timothy*, diſpenſed with no divine inſtitution. It was a matter of perfect *indifferency* in itſelf, whether Timothy were circumciſed or not, as circumciſion was then aboliſhed; but, in as much as his being circumciſed would recommend him to the Jews, Paul conſents to it; it was a matter of as much indifferency in the view of Paul, as whether Timothy ſhould be cloathed in black or white. He ſacrificed or diſpenſed with no inſtitution, in condeſcenſion to the prejudices of the Jews; he only gave way ſo far to their prejudices, as to make uſe of that which was as indifferent, in its nature, as any thing that can be named. I truſt, it muſt hence appear, that we have no right to make uſe of the condeſcenſion that is now plead for; we ought to be condeſcending in matters of *indifferency*, yet we have no right to diſpenſe with *divine inſtitutions*.

Although what has been ſaid does ſufficiently ſhow, that we have no right to diſpenſe with an attendance upon the inſtitution of the Lord's Supper, as there is nothing in ſcripture that warrants it; and ſo that *tenderneſs* to the ſcrupulous does by no means require it; yet, I would ſuggeſt a few things further, which may tend to give further conviction. And,

1ſt. The ſtate of ſuch a perſon as ſcruples his qualifications for an attendance upon the Lord's Supper, while he thinks himſelf qualified to receive the ſeal of baptiſm, is ſuch as requires a very different kind of treatment from indulging and condeſcending to gratify it.

The true ſtate of the caſe is this, the perſon is in an *error*; for he is either qualified for both ordinances or

† See Rom. xiv.

for neither. What is wanting, in this case, is *light* and *instruction*. Our proper business is to teach and instruct him. To begin with him here would be aiming at the difficulty; it would be acting the part of skillful physicians, who aim at the disease, or like surgeons who make their applications directly to the wound. And I cannot think, that there would be any great difficulty in removing *real* and *honest* scruples, were we painful and laborious in our endeavors. But if we are superficial and easily glide over them, we shall rather confirm than remove them. This must be the only proper method of application. Since the person is really in an error, and wants light and instruction, it must be our proper business to communicate it to him in all possible ways; the nature of his case calls for it. Besides,

2dly. It is far from being an act of *kindness* and *tenderness* to indulge the scruples of such, who think themselves qualified for covenanting and baptism, and not for the Lord's Supper. It is not an act of kindness to the scrupulous.

Indulging such scruples, has a direct tendency to confirm them; for whatever we may say about their being *groundless*, we by indulging them so far as to admit such to privileges, do in fact allow them all the weight of *well-grounded* scruples: And it will be more difficult than ever to convince a person that his scruples are groundless, if a church act as if they were well founded. Besides, tolerating such scruples only makes persons easy under them. After their scruples are indulged and their children are baptised, they are less concerned than ever to remove them; and one special motive to be painful and laborious in making their way clear to the table of the Lord is removed, and will never have any more influence. Were we actuated, therefore from a true regard to the *real* interest of the scrupulous, we should never indulge such a scruple, but endeavor, in all possible ways, to remove it. Again,

3dly. Another thing which forbids indulgence, in the caſe under conſideration, is the *influence* it would have on others.

Indulgence of the ſcruple under conſideration is not only without a warrant from ſcripture, and injurious to the real intereſt of the ſcrupulous, but it hurts others; it begets juſt ſuch ſcruples in the minds of others. When perſons are trained up under a practice, which makes a diſtinction between the two ordinances, it naturally and almoſt unavoidably leads them to think, that there is a *real* diſtinction; and ſo multitudes grow up in the belief of it; thouſands are taught it by the practice, who would never have thought of any diſtinction, had not the practice inſtilled it into them in the earlieſt part of life.

When perſons, therefore, think themſelves qualified for covenanting and the privilege of baptiſm, and yet doubt and ſcruple their qualifications for the Lord's Supper, inſtead of its being a duty and an act of kindneſs to grant the former in the neglect of the latter, there is every thing forbids it. It is contrary to the real intereſt of the ſcrupulous; it has a bad influence on others: And to diſpenſe with inſtitutions, in condeſcenſion to the *erroneous* ſcruples and prejudices of men, is without any warrant from ſcripture. The ſcripture recommends condeſcenſion to the weakneſs, ignorance and prejudices of men, ſo far as to make *indifferent* things give way, but no where does it teach us to ſacrifice plain and expreſs *inſtitutions* to them.

9thly. Another thing which has been mentioned in favor of the practice of owning the covenant, is this; That if perſons ſhould come to the Lord's table and be unworthy communicants, their guilt would be greater than if they had only owned their covenant, and never attended upon the inſtitution of the Lord's Supper.

Reply. What is now urged is rather a reason, why persons would *choose* to have the privilege of baptism without attending upon the other institution, than an argument that it is the will of God they should. The case is the same as to all the privileges men enjoy ;— if they misimprove them, their guilt and condemnation will be enhanced : But can we from thence infer, that it is the will of God, that men should turn their backs on all the means of grace, and privileges of the gospel ? If persons should *own the covenant* in an unworthy manner, it would involve them in greater guilt than if they had never profaned the covenant : But, can we from thence infer, that it is the will of God they should receive baptism without so much as owning the covenant ? Certainly we cannot. But we might just as well conclude, that it is the will of God persons should have the privilege of baptism without owning the covenant, or even attending to one instituted mean of grace, as that it is God's will they should have such a privilege in a neglect of the Lord's Supper, on account of the superior guilt they would incur by an unworthy attendance upon that institution ; for it is as true, that a misimprovement of every gospel privilege, enhances the guilt of men, as that their guilt is increased by an unworthy attendance upon the Lord's Supper.

Besides, as the qualifications for covenanting and the Lord's Supper are one and the same, as the latter is only a branch or a duty of the covenant, so persons have no reason to *fear* attending upon the Lord's Supper, when they are well satisfied respecting their qualification for covenanting. There, is, therefore, no occasion for any abatement here, in as much as the qualifications are the same in both cases. If it should be granted, that a person would incur greater guilt by attending upon the Lord's Supper, in an unworthy manner, than if he should neglect to attend upon it, and that this were a sufficient reason for his enjoying bap-

tism in a neglect of the Lord's Supper, we must, for the same reason, view it as a duty, to grant persons the privilege of baptism, without so much as owning the covenant, or even attending on one mean of grace; for in profaning the covenant or the means of grace, they would incur greater guilt than if they had never been guilty of such profanation. So that what is here urged in favor of owning the covenant cannot be viewed as any reason for it; for it equally excludes even the necessity of owning the covenant, and makes it as necessary to dispense with *that*, as with an attendance upon the Lord's Supper; for it is as true that he that covenants in an unworthy manner has greater guilt than if he had not pretended to covenant at all, as it is, that he that communes in an unworthy manner, incurs greater guilt than in neglecting to attend upon the Lord's Supper; and if it be a sufficient reason for excusing persons in the latter case, it must be in the former. Again,

10thly. Some, in justification of the practice of owning the covenant, have said, that John the Baptist administered baptism in his day; and those to whom he administered it, certainly did not attend upon the institution of the Lord's Supper.

Reply. In the days of John the Baptist, the Lord's Supper was not instituted, and so it could not be viewed as a covenant duty, or a neglect of it a defect in a christian profession: But the case is very essentially different now, since the Lord's Supper is instituted and made an incumbent duty on all professors of christianity.

11thly. Another thing, which is of great weight with many, that has been urged in favor of owning the covenant is this, that if this practice be excluded, multitudes of children will be unbaptised, and in a state of heathenism.

Reply. The best truths and the most reasonable institutions may be abused; it is possible this may;

but if the practice of owning the covenant be not within the limits of divine institution, we are not at liberty to alter and lower down the institution, in compliance with the taste and inclinations of mankind. If men cannot find it in their hearts to receive and comply with divine institutions as they come from God, we must not alter them and lower them down to their humours and inclinations. We may not warp off from divine institutions for the sake of making proselytes. It would, however, be a matter of just lamentation that children should be unbaptised, because their parents cannot find it in their hearts to make a complete dedication of themselves to God, and to bear a memorial of the dying love of the Redeemer; but it ought to be considered, that the cause of lamentation must arise from the *unreasonable* state of men's minds, and not from the unreasonableness and severity of such an institution, as makes such a complete dedication of themselves indispensably necessary to that seal of the covenant.

12thly. It has been urged, in favour of the practice of owning the covenant, that if none may be admitted to the ordinance of baptism, unless they attend upon the Lord's Supper, men will rush on, unprepared, to the table of the Lord.

Reply. No plan can be answerable for the abuses it may suffer. If persons will rush on unprepared to the Lord's Supper, for the sake of having their children baptised, they must answer for their rashness. The same persons would covenant unworthily too, for the sake of the same privilege. If we would lower down the institution so that it could be liable to no abuse from the inconsiderateness or rashness of men, we must insist on no qualifications at all. If men are so eager to obtain baptism, as is supposed in what is now urged, they will covenant in an unworthy manner to obtain it. If men will make such an idol of baptism as to rush "upon the thick bosses" of the buckler of the Most High to obtain it, they must an-

swer it to him. If we would effectually remove all danger arising from the rashness and inconsiderateness of men, we must dispense with all terms and qualifications; we must not even retain the practice of owning the covenant. So that what is now urged is nothing in favour of owning the covenant, and cannot be viewed as any objection to its exclusion.

13thly. In support of the practice under consideration, it has been further said; That people ought to be *encouraged* in every religious motion. If they cannot now bind themselves to do *every thing*, yet let them proceed as far as they *can*. This will discourage them to proceed further; whereas, if they may not proceed as far as their *present* light and inclination will admit, they will be discouraged from doing any thing.

Reply. It is readily admitted, that every reasonable measure ought to be taken, to encourage men to do their duty? but nothing ought to be done, which indicates that they are something which they are not.

Baptism is designed as a public mark that men are christians or disciples. It was not designed to indicate that they are *partly* such—that they have taken *some* steps towards it, by doing *some* of the things which are required to be done by christians. Were there any instituted way to signify, how far persons have proceeded, who have not become christians altogether, in practice, such a sign might, with propriety, be used; but there is the greatest impropriety, in using a mark or sign, which indicates, that the persons on whom it is set, have become christians in *full*, when, in fact, they have only advanced some steps towards it. Therein the inconsistency of the practice under consideration appears; for in the administration of baptism, according to it, a public mark is set, of persons becoming christians, when in reality they have only taken some steps towards it. Now, although it be true, that religious motions are to be properly encouraged; yet it is perfectly unreasonable, that we should set the mark of their having become christians in *full*, when

in fact, according to what is supposed in what is now urged, they have only set out to do *something*, but not *all* that which is required of christians. This would be imposing on the christian world, for the sake of encouraging individuals, to make further progress towards being real christians. Baptism was not designed as an *encouragement* to men to *become* christians, but as a *positive mark* that they are *already* such. So that no argument for the practice can be derived from what is now urged,—there is no reason for the practice in that view of it; but the highest impropriety, as the design of baptism is to signify, that persons are *already* christians, not that they have made *some* motions and taken *some* steps towards it.

Besides, granting christian privileges before men get to be really christians does not tend in the least, to *encourage* them to strive for further attainments; but the reverse. If persons are admitted to *christian privileges* short of their being fully christians, they have nothing further, of *that nature* to induce them to make further advances. If the privileges and immunities of a civil community were restricted to such as are, in all respects, loyal, there would be the strongest inducements to loyalty, in the view of all such as were desirous of sharing in those honors and privileges; but if, on the contrary, those who are loyal in *some* respects only, may share in them, as well as those who keep *all* the laws of the community, what inducements to loyalty, are there remaining, which arise from a desire of sharing in those privileges?

It must be thus, in the case under consideration. If christian privileges may be administered to such only as become christians in *full*, there is, every inducement to become such; but if such privileges may be conferred on such, as are only supposed to have taken *some* steps towards it, what inducement is left to such persons, to make further progress, arising from a desire of enjoying christian privileges? They have already attained them.

Further acquirements are not neceſſary in this view of it—They have nothing further to expect—They can obtain all ſuch privileges with their *preſent* acquirements.

It is certain, therefore, that the practice of owning the covenant is not neceſſary, as an inducement to thoſe perſons to make further progreſs in religion, who cannot bind themſelves to an attendance on all chriſtian duties. It is ſo far from having a tendency to it, as that it has a moſt natural tendency to induce them to reſt eaſy with preſent acquirements; for if they are ſufficient to entitle to chriſtian privileges, the inducement to ſtrive for ſomething further is removed. But if, on the contrary, chriſtian privileges are reſtricted to thoſe, who ſhall attend to all the commands of Chriſt, all the original motives, to induce perſons to make proficiency in religious acquirements, do remain in full force.

There muſt, certainly, be the higheſt impropriety, in fixing the mark of chriſtians in *full* on ſuch, as are only chriſtians in *part*; i. e. to ſuch as only ſee their way clear to attend to *ſome part* of their duty. As has already been obſerved, if there were any inſtituted mark, which was deſigned to ſignify, how many ſteps a perſon had taken towards being a chriſtian in full, there might be a propriety in making uſe of it, when perſons had begun and taken ſome ſteps towards being ſuch; but inaſmuch as baptiſm is deſigned to ſignify, that perſons are *already* chriſtians, ſo there is a manifeſt impropriety in adminiſtering it to perſons, who have only ſet out and taken ſome ſteps, ſhort of the whole, towards it.

On the whole, I think it as evident as a truth can well be, that there is no propriety in the practice, when the nature of it is conſidered: and it is equally evident, that it is not neceſſary as an inducement to perſons to make further progreſs in religious acquirements: but on the contrary, that it has a direct tendency to induce them to reſt eaſy with preſent attain-

ments; because, on that plan, they can have all the privileges they desire or ask for, with the progress and attainments they have already made. So that what is now urged affords not the least argument for the practice; it is rather a weighty reason for its abolition.

I have now taken notice of every thing that I can recollect to have heard offered in favor of the practice of owning the covenant; I would now desire you to take what has been said into *serious* consideration, and to judge upon it with *impartiality*. "Search the scriptures" to see if things be not really so; and remember that you are accountable for your faith as well as your practice. I shall now proceed as was proposed,

II. To exhibit a number of things to view, which show the unscriptural nature of the practice of *owning the covenant*; and why it ought to be abolished.

I would ask your serious attention to what will now be offered, and hope you will exercise all that impartialty which becomes accountable creatures, when attending to matters that are intimately connected with the welfare of Christ's kingdom in the world.

In replying to the various things which have been urged in favor of the practice, I have had occasion to touch on the principal things, which I have in my mind against it; so that much less enlargement will now be made, on many things that will be suggested, than would otherwise have been necessary. And it is hoped, that what has been said will be carefully remembered. I now proceed to say,

1st. That one reason which has great weight in my mind, for the abolition of the practice of administering baptism to the seed of such parents, who professedly and practically withhold their attendance upon the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is this, it does not appear that the apostles were in it.

It does not appear from any thing the apostles *said* or *did* that they were acquainted with such a practice. I am sensible, that in some instances, it is not said that

thoſe who were baptiſed, ſuch as the *Eunuch*, *Cornelius* and others, were holden to an attendance upon the inſtitution of the Lord's Supper; yet there is as much ſaid reſpecting that inſtitution as any other chriſtian duty; and we have as much reaſon to believe, that the apoſtles conſidered them as holden to attend upon the inſtitution of the Lord's Supper, as often as they ſhould have opportunity, as upon any one chriſtian duty. We may as well ſuppoſe, that ſome whom the apoſtles admitted to the ordinance of baptiſm were to attend on no one chriſtian duty, as that they were not to attend on the inſtitution of the Lord's Supper; for, in the caſes juſt mentioned, there is as much mention made of the Lord's Supper as any other duty.—It is no where ſaid, that they did tolerate adults in an omiſſion of the Lord's Supper.—What reaſon, therefore, have we to conclude they did practiſe ſuch a toleration? Such a concluſion muſt be altogether arbitrary. Some who have been profeſſed advocates for the practice of owning the covenant, have acknowledged it as an undoubted fact, that *all* the diſciples (in the apoſtles days) did attend upon the memorial of Chriſt's death. One, in particular, when ſpeaking of the Lord's Supper, ſays, "This was an ordinance appointed for the whole body of Chriſt's viſible church to attend upon, who profeſſed the chriſtian faith. And accordingly they thus practiſed in the apoſtles' days, as all their diſciples attended upon this memorial†." Others have looked upon it very doubtful, whether the practice of owning the covenant be agreeable to the practice of the apoſtles; or within the limits of divine inſtitution; for, it cannot otherwiſe be accounted for, that ſome ſhould ſay, they are not *for* the practice whilſt they are *in* it; and another, that ſcarcely *one* miniſter in the nation is pleaſed with it.

Now, unleſs there be ſufficient evidence, that the practice of admitting perſons to the privilege of bap-

† Ely's Serm. p. 34.

tism, who professedly and practically withhold their attendance upon the institution of the Lord's Supper; was known to the apostles, what reason can be offered for the practice now? Were not the apostles sufficiently condescending? Or, is it more *necessary* now than in the apostles days? That cannot be pretended; for if it were ever necessary, it was then, when the disciples they made emerged out of a state of heathenism, and had not the advantages of a religious education from the earliest days of childhood. If the apostles were in the practice of owning the covenant, as now under consideration, it would have appeared from some thing they said or did: but it is no more evident that they tolerated their disciples in an omission of the Lord's Supper than any other duty. And it is certain, if the apostles were not in that practice, we have no kind of warrant for it; for they were certainly as well acquainted with the will of Christ as we can pretend to be. And among all the instances of their condescension, it does not appear, that they ever made any law or institution of Christ's kingdom give way to the weakness, scruples or prejudices of mankind.

2dly. Another reason for the abolition of the practice of owning the covenant, or administering baptism to such adults as withhold their attendance upon the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is this, it is in a degree a *perversion* of the *end* and *design* of baptism.

If we are to form our notions concerning the end and design of baptism, from the use and design of circumcision, we must view it as a *mark* and *token* of the covenant.* It is not a token of a *partial* covenant; but that a person is *full* in the covenant, or under engagements to do *all* covenant duties. Now, baptism, when administered to such, who do not mean to engage to attend upon *all* the duties of the covenant, and are not understood as engaging this, cannot with any propriety be used as a seal or *token* of the *whole* covenant; for the person is not *full* in the covenant; or

* Gen. xvii. 11.

which is the same thing, he is not under engagements to do or attend upon *all* the duties of the covenant.—The Lord's Supper is a covenant duty; but such as own the covenant, as now under consideration, do not mean to engage to do this, or to live in the observation of that institution: Their covenant is therefore *partial*; it does not extend to *all* the duties of the covenant.—There is therefore this inconsistency in administering baptism to such as only make such a covenant, it fixes that which was designed and intended as a mark of the *whole* covenant, to a covenant which is *short* of the whole; that is, to a covenant which does not include *complete* subjection.† It may be said, that the person who enters into covenant, may *suppose* that he engages every thing that is required of him; yet, inasmuch as he really does not, we ought rather to set him right, than to misuse the seal, or in any measure pervert the end and design of baptism. Again,

3dly. If we may infer any thing, concerning the practice now under consideration, from the laws and rules which God gave his church, under the Jewish dispensation, it must be this, that it ought to be abolished.

The rules and laws which God gave his church, under the former dispensation, did not admit of a practice of that nature; for it was expressly ordered, that he who kept not the passover, should be cut off from from his people. There was no toleration of such a neglect or omission. It is true, if a Jew should hap-

† Some seem to insist upon it, that the covenant such make who own the covenant, as 'tis called, is full and complete; but it is certain they do not engage to attend upon all christian duties; their covenant does not extend to all covenant duties; or so far as the covenant of other professors. It may be granted, it is not, strictly speaking, a *half-way* covenant; but it can't be pretended that it is *full* and *complete*, for if omitting one covenant duty does not render a covenant incomplete, omitting two does not; and if omitting two does not, then omitting all covenant duties would not. I am unable to conceive what we are to understand by a complete covenant, unless it be an engagement to do all the duties of the covenant: And if this be what we are to understand by it, then such as do not engage to do *all* the duties of the covenant, are not in a complete covenant standing.

pen to be unclean or on a distant journey at the time the passover was to be kept, he was tolerated in an omission of it until the next month; but not till the next annual return of the passover, on any pretence whatever. That constitution did not admit one to a standing in the church, or among God's people, who lived in a neglect of *one* public institution.† Some will say, perhaps, that when it is said that he that "forbeareth to keep the passover" shall be cut off from his people, it is meant one, who shall neglect to keep it out of *slight* and *contempt*; but with much greater reason it may be said, that it meant every person, who for any reason whatever should live in an habitual omission of that institution; for there is no distinction made: and the whole account teaches us, that no excuse or apology could be offered, excepting defilement or being on a distant journey, and that was considered as a sufficient excuse, only for an occasional omission; or delaying to keep it for one month. There is something very striking and significant, in God's making such special provision for such as could not keep the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month: God's making it necessary to keep it by themselves, on the fourteenth day of the next month, evidently teaches us, that God did insist upon it that such as had a standing in his church, or among his covenant people, should by no means live in a neglect or omission of one capital institution. So that if we may collect any thing from the constitution of the Jewish church, respecting the practice of owning the covenant, it is this: that it ought never to have been introduced; and so ought now to be abolished.

4thly. Another reason for the abolition of the practice of owning the covenant is, its contrariety to the plain sense and meaning of the commission which Christ gave his apostles, when he sent them forth to baptise.

The commission which Christ gave his apostles was

† Num. ix. 1—13.

expreſſed in theſe words : " Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptiſing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt ;—*teaching them to obſerve* ALL *things whatſoever I have commanded you.*"‡ Now the moſt plain and obvious meaning of this commiſſion is this :—" Go ye and teach all nations," that is Jews and Gentiles ;—teach them the nature and duties of the Chriſtian religion :—And having led them to an underſtanding of them things, if any ſhould be ſo far convinced of their reality, importance and excellency as to be deſirous of embracing and engaging in my cauſe and ſervice, do you baptiſe them, or ſet upon them the mark of my followers and ſubjects : But, in the mean time, do you inſiſt upon it, that they " *obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you ;*"—that they live in the practice of all the duties of the chriſtian religion ; for, I would not have you ſet the mark belonging to my ſubjects, upon ſuch as live in the neglect of the things which I have commanded and enjoined ; or upon ſuch as are not really ſubject to my will, as ſignified in my commands and inſtitutions.—This is the moſt plain and natural import of the commiſſion. And, without any further comment upon it, it muſt appear to be directly oppoſed to the practice of owning the covenant, which admits thoſe to baptiſm, who do not mean to be underſtood to engage an attendance upon a plain commanded duty, and are not conſidered by others as cenſurable for a neglect.

5thly. Another reaſon for the excluſion of the practice of owning the covenant is this : It ſtands oppoſed to the will of Chriſt, as ſignified in the inſtitution of the Lord's Supper.

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper is not to be viewed, merely as a *privilege* which men may enjoy, but it ought to be conſidered as a *duty* which is incumbent on diſciples, as ſuch. The direction, " *Do*

‡ Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

ye this in remembrance of me," was designed for some body :—And to whom did our Saviour direct himself, excepting his *disciples ?*—And are not adults, who enjoy the seal of the covenant, disciples ? Don't the church consider them as such, when they grant them the seal of baptism ? They most certainly do. They are, therefore, the very persons to whom our Saviour directs himself, when he says, "*Do ye this in remembrance of me.*" This shows that the will of Christ, as signified and expressed in the institution of the Lord's Supper, is of a very different import from that practice, which dispenses with their attendance upon it ; and that such a practice stands directly opposed to Christ's will as signified in that institution ; for therein Christ says, do ye this, &c. but this practice essentially consists in dispensing with an attendance upon it. Again,

6thly. The practice of owning the covenant is unjustifiable, as it builds up one ordinance at the expence of another.

The practice of owning the covenant, if it were made perfect, would strip the communion table of guests. The more it is practised, the smaller is the number of those who bear a memorial of Christ's love. The plain language of it is, it is better that the great Redeemer should be without a memorial, than that worms of the dust should be without the seal of the covenant ! The practice essentially consists in dispensing with an attendance upon the instituted memorial of Christ's death, in order to persons enjoying the seal of the covenant, or the privilege of baptism. The Lord's Supper is subordinated to the ordinance of baptism by this practice. The memorial of Christ's death, is, as it were, set aside, that men may enjoy the seal of baptism. It is more than possible, that in process of time, this practice will strip the communion table of guests. It is a fact which cannot be disputed, that owning the covenant is a place in which men are exceedingly inclined to rest easy ; and it is equally true,

that the people in such places where the practice has obtained, and is not scrupled, run more and more into it. And, the practice of owning the covenant, on the whole, flourishes and thrives on the ruins of the other institution; the one is built up on the ruins of the other: And in this view of it, it is altogether unjustifiable; as we have no right or warrant to set the ordinances of Christ at variance with each other.

7thly. Another reason for the exclusion of the practice of owning the covenant is, it sets up an unwarrantable distinction among professed Christians.

The scriptures consider Christians as being of *one* denomination; not as Christians in *part* and Christians in *full*. They consider all professors, I mean adults, as having *one* faith, *one* Lord, *one* baptism, &c.* And the apostles always addressed them as being of *one* denomination. But the practice of owning the covenant makes different denominations of christians. Those who *own the covenant* do not mean to engage to do so much as other professed Christians do; they do not mean to engage an attendance upon one plain and important institution; neither do such as admit them understand them as engaging to do it, or disciplinable if they neglect it. So that there is really a difference made by that practice among professors; and such a difference too, as is not warranted by any thing revealed in the scriptures: And, for this reason, it is a practice that ought to be abolished.

8thly. The practice of owning the covenant is absolutely *unnecessary* upon the principles of the gospel.

The qualifications for baptism and the Lords Supper are really *one* and the *same*. Persons must be in covenant in order to baptism: And being in the covenant certainly qualifies for all covenant duties and privileges. And there can be no greater or more solemn transaction, than for creatures to covenant with their great Creator. It is true, indeed, if persons mean no more by covenanting than to appear well, *externally*, there is no great solemnity in it; but if they mean to

* Eph. iv. 4—6.

give up themſelves to God to be his, and to receive him as their God, and conſider covenanting as implying a heart correſponding with the words of the covenant, it is not only ſolemn, but it implies every thing requiſite to an acceptable diſcharge of all Chriſtian duties.

Beſides, covenating, in its nature, implies in it an engagement to do *all* covenant duties; for what do we mean by covenanting, except it be *engaging* to do the duties of the covenant? And the Lord's Supper is one plain duty of the covenant.—The qualifications for baptiſm and the Lord's Supper, therefore, being one and the ſame, as they are both covenant duties, there can be, on the principles of the goſpel, no neceſſity for the practice of owning the covenant; and as it is unneceſſary on goſpel principles, it ought to be viewed ſo on every principle, and ſo to be aboliſhed.

Again,

9thly. Another reaſon which I would offer for the abolition of the practice of owning the covenant is this: It is built upon a principle which cannot, conſiſtently, ſtop ſhort of diſpenſing with all chriſtian duties.

I am unable to ſee what right or warrant a church has to tolerate a perſon in the neglect of the Lord's Supper, rather than in a neglect of any other duty. The principle upon which the practice is founded is this: That ſcrupulous conſciences muſt be indulged; but if they muſt be indulged ſo far as to diſpenſe with divine inſtitutions for their ſake, where will the principle end? If one ſcruple muſt be ſo far indulged, why not another? If a perſon may be viewed and treated as in good ſtanding in the neglect of the Lord's Supper, why not for the ſame reaſon in the neglect of any other duty? Here is one has doubts and ſcruples reſpecting the doctrine of original ſin;—another has doubts reſpecting the divinity of Chriſt;—a third has ſcruples about the Chriſtian Sabbath;—a fourth perſon doubts whether there be any Sabbath at all: Now,

why may we not tolerate all these doubts, and a thousand more, so far as to give up the necessity of a belief of those doctrines, and the practice of those duties, as well as the scruple respecting the Lord's Supper? Why may not a church tolerate one neglect in one person, another neglect in another person, and so on till they tolerate, among them all, a neglect of every duty of the Christian religion, as well as a neglect of the Lord's Supper? If we once begin to dispense with an attendance upon divine institutions, on account of erroneous scruples, I know not where we can fix those nice bounds which may not be superceded. I am unable to see, why other ordinances must not give way to scruples, as well as the Lord's Supper. Is the Lord's Supper so unimportant an institution, as that men may be good christians in the neglect of it, and not in the neglect of other duties? Why should this be almost the *only* neglect which can be tolerated?—The principle on which the practice of owning the covenant is built, if pursued, must make thorough work with christian duties. If we once begin to dispense with christian duties, or an attendance upon them, on account of *erroneous* scruples, I cannot see where we may consistently stop. Furthermore,

10thly. The consequences of which the practice of owning the covenant is productive, show the importance of its being abolished.

Could we not see *very bad* consequences flowing from it, yet, inasmuch as there appears no room in the institution for it,—as it is not supported by the practice of the apostles, and the principle on which it is built is subversive of all christian duties, it ought to be excluded. But the practice is, most manifestly, productive of many bad consequences.

1stly. It naturally leads men to think, that in covenanting with God, there is very little solemnity.

This practice leads people to think, that it is a *small* matter to covenant;—that the obligations on such as only covenant are *small*, compared with the obligations

which are upon thoſe who are in full communion. It is granted that they are told otherwiſe; yet inaſmuch as they are admitted out of indulgence to ſuch an opinion, they will think ſo, and it is moſt manifeſt that a great part feel ſo.

2dly. Another evil attendant on the practice of owning the covenant, is, the unkind influence it has on the perſon who is admitted to privileges in that way.

It is done, I grant, out of real kindneſs to the ſcrupulous perſon; but it is not kind in its influence reſpecting him. It rather confirms his ſcruple; for the practice looks as if the church thought it a juſt one. To ſay the leaſt, by indulging the ſcruple, the ſcrupulous are put to *reſt*; and they commonly reſt very eaſy without ſeeking any thing further. It is like ſewing pillows under mens arm-holes; and it removes ſome ſpecial incentives, they would have otherwiſe had to be aſſiduous, in making their way clear to an attendance upon the other ordinance and inſtitution.

3dly. The practice of owning the covenant has a bad influence, not only on the perſon who has privileges in that way, but on others.

It naturally leads others to think there is a *real* difference, in point of qualification, for the ordinances of baptiſm and the Lord's Supper; or in other words, it has a natural tendency to train up others in juſt ſuch a ſcruple as it was deſigned to indulge. When others ſee there is a *real* difference in *practice*, reſpecting the two ordinances, they will conclude that there is a difference as to the requiſite *qualifications* for them; and thus the ſcruple grows up with them. The practice is the mother and the nurſe of ſuch ſcruples.—In this way it embarraſſes the minds of the more ſerious, and frightens them away from Chriſt's table.—They think that covenanting with God is a moſt ſolemn tranſaction, and if partaking of the ſacrament of the Lord's Supper be ſtill more ſolemn, as this practice teaches, they will ſay as St. Paul did in another caſe, "Who is ſufficient for theſe things?"—As the practice does na-

turally lead persons to think, that there is a real difference in point of qualification for the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper; so they will either conclude, that it is a *small* matter to covenant with God; or if they retain proper conceptions of covenanting, they will be *frightned* away from Christ's table, as too sacred for partially sanctified creatures to approach. It almost necessarily leads to one or the other of these extremes. Again,

The practice of owning the covenant, naturally leads people to make an *idol* of baptism; and to consider the ordinance of the Lord's Supper as of *small* consequence; for as mankind in that practice are exhibiting a great zeal for baptism, and show but little or no inclination to enjoy the ordinance of the Lord's Supper; so it is natural for young people, who are trained up under it, to conclude, that it must be because baptism is of so much *greater* importance than the other ordinances. Hence it is, that so many feel very uneasy till their children are baptised, and so easy in neglecting, all their days, the memorial of Christ's death.

These and a variety of other evil consequences which might be mentioned, of which the practice of owning the covenant is productive, show the importance of its being abolished. I will only add,

11thly. That the *good* consequences attending a contrary practice, show the importance of abolishing the practice of owning the covenant.

I am very sensible, that many disagreeable consequences may follow an attempt to abolish the practice of owning the covenant, through an unjust attachment to it, and the unreasonable prejudice of men in its favor. I am also, sensible, that it has been said, that if none may be admitted to the privilege of baptism, excepting such as engage an attendance upon all instituted duties, without excepting an attendance upon the Lord's Supper, several bad consequences will ensue; such as many children going unbaptised;

rushing on unprepared to the communion table, &c. But these have been already shown to be unnatural consequences, if they should take place. As they have already been considered, I shall refer you to what hath been said respecting them; and proceed to point out several very important things which would attend a practice that admits no adults to the privilege of baptism, who do not engage an attendance upon all institutions. And,

1st. Such a practice would make a *union* and *oneness* among professed Christians.

They would then have *one* faith, *one* Lord, and *one* baptism: They would in all respects be *one*, as to visible Christianity; which would make a church appear like the church in the apostles days, as they would then continue *stedfastly* in the apostles doctrines, and in *breaking of bread* and in *prayers*.

2dly. If none were admitted to baptism excepting such as engage to attend upon all ordinances, the honor of all ordinances would be equally maintained.

While the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is made to give way to the ordinance of baptism, the former will be considered as of but little importance when compared with the latter: but if none were admitted to baptism, excepting such as attend upon all ordinances, the importance of all would be vindicated and maintained; the rights of the Lord's table and Christ's authority in all his institutions would be supported. A church would then speak the same language with Christ in his ordinances, both in word and practice.

3dly. If none should be admitted to baptism, I mean adults, excepting such as engage to attend upon all ordinances, good purposes would be answered, respecting such as may be under scruples.

It would make them *painful* in their endeavors to remove their scruples. If we should labor to *remove*, instead of *indulging* scruples, we should stand a good chance to obliterate them, and so to help on the scru-

pulous perſon to attend, with comfort and ſatisfaction, upon his whole duty: But if we ſhould once indulge it, his ſcruple, if any thing, would be more confirmed; at leaſt, it would not be removed, and the beſt opportunity for removing it would be over and paſt.

Once more,

4thly. If none were admitted to baptiſm, excepting ſuch as attend upon all ordinances, it would anſwer kind purpoſes to mankind in general.

It would lead all to ſee the importance of all ordinances: It would guard them againſt unjuſt ſcruples; for if they ſhould ſee no diſtinction among ordinances in practice, they would not ſuſpect any difference, in point of qualification, for ſpecial ordinances. It would alſo lead people to ſee the importance of being prepared and qualified for an early attendance upon the Lord's Supper, as well as baptiſm.

Thus the tendency of a practice which admits none to baptiſm, excepting ſuch as attend upon all ordinances and live in the practice of all Chriſtian duties, is ſuch, as I apprehend would ſufficiently juſtify the abolition of the practice of owning the covenant.

We have now taken a particular view of the *nature* and *tendency* of the practice of owning the covenant. We have conſidered the foundation on which it reſts, and the reaſons for its excluſion. It has, I apprehend, been ſhown, that it was not *in being* in the apoſtles days: That it is contrary to the *expreſs will* of God, as manifeſted to his church under the former diſpenſation: That it is contrary to the *ſpirit* and plain import of the *commiſſion* which Chriſt gave his apoſtles, when he ſent them forth to baptiſe: That it is *oppoſed to the will* of Chriſt, as expreſſed in the inſtitution of the Lord's Supper: That it ſets up an *unwarrantable diſtinction* between the ordinances of baptiſm and the Lord's Supper: That it is utterly *unneceſſary* upon *goſpel principles*: That it makes an *unwarrantable diſtinction* among profeſſed Chriſtians: That the *principle* on which it is built and grounded, is ſuch, as that

there can, conſiſtently, *be no ſtop ſhort of an indulgence of all ſcruples*, and *an exemption from the practice of all Chriſtian duties*, ſo far as any ſcruples may happen to ariſe about them: That it is of a *bad* and *pernicious tendency*, both reſpecting ſuch as are indulged and others. Finally, it has been obſerved, that the *tendency* of a *contrary practice* is ſuch, as *fully juſtifies* and *warrants* the *abolition* and *excluſion* of the practice of owning the covenant. The matter, my hearers, is now ſubmitted to your impartial conſideration; and I hope you will not fail to ſearch the ſcriptures diligently, to ſee if things are ſo; and may the FATHER of LIGHTS direct you into a right underſtanding of them.

IMPROVEMENT.

All that will be offered, by way of improvement, will be in two particulars. And,

Firſt, What has been ſaid leads us to ſee the unreaſonable nature of many things, that have been ſaid againſt that practice which admits none to the ordinance of baptiſm, who live in an habitual neglect of any public ordinance and inſtitution.

Many things have been ſaid, which are highly calculated to raiſe popular clamor and uneaſineſs. It has been ſaid, that ſuch a practice, debars perſons of baptiſm, caſts them out of covenant, is *hard, cruel, &c.* But what has been ſaid, leads ſuch to ſee that perſons caſt themſelves out of covenant, by not keeping covenant with God, or not living in the practiſe of covenant duties. If there be any fault, it is in *themſelves*. If there be any *cruelty* and *ſeverity* in the caſe, it is in the *inſtitution*, and not in thoſe who practice according to it. The charge therefore terminates againſt God; for it has been ſhown, that his inſtitution admits none to baptiſm, excepting ſuch who are in covenant with him; or do engage to live in the practice of covenant duties; if, therefore, there be any cruelty or ſeverity in not admitting ſuch to the ordinance of baptiſm, who withhold their attendance on covenant duties, it is owing to the inſtitution. But how unjuſt and un-

reasonable is the out-cry, that it is cruel and severe to withhold baptism from such who withhold their attendance upon the ordinance of the Lord's Supper? What has been said leads us to see that it is an act of real kindness to them and to all around. Indulgence may be sweet to persons, but it is no act of kindness to confirm their scruples and to sew pillows under their arm holes that they may feel easy in a neglect of plain gospel institutions: No, it is the worst thing that can be done for them, and its evil influence extends to multitudes around them.

And what has been said leads us to see, that if any should suffer their children to go unbaptised, because they cannot obtain baptism, unless they attend upon the memorial of Christ's death, they would act a perfectly unreasonable part; for the Lord's Supper is a reasonable institution, and it is a duty of the covenant. The apostles admitted persons to baptism on no other terms. It becomes men to be very cautious how they raise a clamour against such a practice, by calling it *hard* and *cruel*, since it terminates against the constitution of heaven, and is of equal force against the practice of the apostles.

Secondly. What has been said will be further improved, in some particular addresses.

1st. To the church in general.

My Brethren, you have now had the practice of owning the covenant laid open to you, both as to the nature of it and its consequences: And using that impartiality which it becomes you to exercise, must you not determine, that its consequences are bad—that it stands opposed to the will of Christ and the rights of his table—that it is entirely unnecessary upon the principles of the gospel? Are not the qualifications for baptism and the Lord's Supper one and the same? If there be a *scruple* in the mind of any one, is there precept or example in the Bible for dispensing with an attendance on plain gospel institutions in a way of condescension to it? Moreover, is not the practice

of owning the covenant opposed to the practice of the apostles, whose disciples continued, stedfastly, in *breaking of bread*, as well as in the apostles doctrines and in prayers? And, is it not opposed to the commission which Christ gave to the apostles? If these things do appear to you, does not the honor of Christ and the welfare of Zion demand, that a period be put to the practice? As you are professed friends of Christ and his cause, you are bound to think on these things, and to act as Christ and the welfare of his church demand.

2dly. I would particularly address such as are in a covenant standing, and yet withhold their attendance on the memorial of Christ's death.

I have now considered the standing you are in, with freedom and impartiality; and have shown, I trust, that it is wholly unscriptural; yet I do not consider you as in it with a view of its unscriptural nature, or pernicious consequences: I consider you as having acted *honestly*, yet *erroneously*. You will not think that I am your enemy, because I have told you the truth. I can truly say concerning you, as St. Paul said concerning his brethren, the Jews, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for you is, that ye may be saved." You will suffer me further, with all the earnestness and importunity which becometh one who hath the welfare of your souls in charge, to urge you to consider, whether the standing you are in be not unscriptural—whether it does not become the professed disciples of Jesus Christ to keep all his commandments? "If ye love me, keep my commandments," says Christ. You profess to call Christ your Lord and Master: But says Christ, "*Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*" This demand of our Saviour's is directly to your case; and I entreat you to consider, whether you can ever answer for your neglect to Christ—whether you are not called upon to quit your present standing; and as you profess to call Christ, LORD, whether you are not bound to do as he hath commanded you?

Let what has been said be impartially considered by you, and then ask your own consciences, whether you ought to persist any longer in a practice, so evidently contrary to the practice of the apostles?

3dly. I will offer a few words in an address to such as have not, as yet, dedicated their children to God in baptism.

The obligations upon you to dedicate your children to God in baptism, are great and indispensible: But then it is your duty to dedicate them in the manner that God has directed you. Why do you delay and neglect in so important a duty? Is it because you may not proceed in it unless you attend upon all the duties of the covenant without excepting the institution of the Lord's Supper? What right have you to that seal of the covenant, short of your engaging to do covenant duties? A Jew might not be acknowledged as having a standing in the covenant, who would live in an habitual neglect of a plain covenant duty. There is no evidence that the apostles baptised on any other terms; Why then should you desire it? You will say that you scruple your qualifications for an attendance upon the ordinance of the Lord's Supper; but why more than your qualifications for covenanting? Is a person qualified to *engage* to do the duties of the covenant, and yet not qualified actually to *do* them?—You cannot take upon you the whole covenant, unless you engage to attend upon the memorial of Christ's death: for that is a covenant duty. Besides, would you have plain gospel institutions set aside in condescension to your scruples? Where is the precept, where is the example for such condescension? It is not to be found in your Bibles. Moreover, can you answer your neglect to Christ?—Will it do (when he comes to enquire of you the occasion of your neglect) for you to say, we might not receive the ordinance unless we had engaged an attendance upon the instituted memorial of thy death! Will you have a face to urge that, as an unreasonable term! However you may now view the matter, you

can never find an excuſe which will juſtify your neglect from that quarter. I am far from deſiring to abridge you of one privilege: My duty and intereſt both invite me to do every thing for you, which is conſiſtent with that reſpect I always ought to have for divine inſtitutions. I urge it upon you, to conſider, what hath been ſaid with impartiality, and compare it with the word of God; and then aſk your own conſciences, whether there is not the greateſt probability, if not *full* evidence, that the practice of owning the covenant is not of divine original.

CONCLUSION.

LET one and all be diſpoſed to receive and embrace the light, which divine revelation ſets before you. There is a day of ſolemn account approaching, wherein every one will be judged *according* to the *goſpel*. If, therefore, what hath been ſaid be agreeable to the ſcriptures (which appears to me, after the moſt painful examination, to be really the caſe) no prejudices ought to reject it. And, I cannot but think, that what hath been ſaid, muſt recommend itſelf to every man's conſcience, as inculcating a plan agreeable to what the church was uſed to of old;—a plan, agreeable to what the church was uſed to in the apoſtles days?—and a plan calculated to maintain the honor and authority of Chriſt,—to excite and quicken to all duty, and to build up the church of Chriſt in the world in unity.

May the FATHER of LIGHTS accompany divine truth with his bleſſing, and grant that we may build upon the foundation of the apoſtles and prophets, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief corner-ſtone: And in HIM may the whole building, being fitly framed together, grow up into an holy Temple in the Lord.——AMEN.